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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KSCA](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [CA](#) [WHO](#) [KSTH](#)

SUBJECT: Avian Influenza Report 1: Low Pathogenic Virus
Found in British Columbia

Ref. Ottawa 2827 (Public Health Emergency Governance)

1. Summary: Avian influenza virus detected on November 18 in a domesticated duck from a farm in British Columbia has been confirmed as a low pathogenic H5 North American strain. An estimated 67,000 ducks and other fowl from the farm and surrounding area will be euthanized. A national wild bird survey conducted over the past weeks has identified low pathogenic North American subtypes of Avian Influenza in ducks from Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia - the birds were free of the strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza responsible for animal and human illness in Southeast Asia. Wild birds from Ontario are currently being examined to identify the H5 avian influenza subtype they are carrying. End summary.

2. On November 20, 2005 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced that the avian influenza virus detected on November 18 in a duck from a farm in British Columbia has been confirmed as a low pathogenic H5 North American strain (as of November 21 the CFIA has not indicated precisely which particular low pathogenic strain it is, whether H5N1, N3, N2 or N7). The confirmation means that the particular virus subtype would cause only mild disease, if any at all, in exposed birds. It also means that this subtype is not the strain currently circulating in Asia. According to Canadian authorities there is no new risk to public health.

3. The CFIA is implementing preventative and precautionary control measures to limit and prevent the spread of the virus to other commercial premises. Preparations are underway to euthanize all birds on the premises from which the duck originated. The CFIA's actions are consistent with the recommendations agreed to by governments and industry following the 2004 Abbotsford, British Columbia outbreak and reflect the guidelines of the World Organization for Animal Health. The virus is different than the H7N3 strain found during the 2004 Abbotsford outbreak in which approximately 17 million domesticated fowl were euthanized.

4. Surveillance is being conducted to monitor the health of domestic birds in the immediate area. Specifically, samples are being tested from a number of other premises that may have been exposed to birds from the farm. In addition, all commercial premises within five kilometers of the farm are being tested for any signs of disease. According to APHIS, because this is an H5 virus, the USG has placed temporary trade restrictions on birds and bird product from mainland British Columbia. These will be in place at least until Canada has completed their epidemiological evaluation and APHIS has conducted its own evaluation of the information.

5. The GoC is examining whether there is any link between the infected duck and avian influenza virus found in migratory birds during a recent wild bird survey. According to CFIA, although it may not be possible to conclusively identify the origin of infection, the ongoing presence of avian influenza in wild birds reinforces the importance of maintaining strict Biosecurity controls in all domestic bird operations.

6. A national wild bird survey conducted by the Government of Canada earlier in the autumn had found Avian Influenza virus in wild birds from Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia. Molecular testing of

samples collected from the three provinces ruled out the Asian strain of avian influenza and confirmed that the viruses are low pathogenic. Further analysis definitively identified the presence of low-pathogenic North American subtypes H5N3 in Quebec birds, H5N1 in Manitoba, and H5N9 and H5N2 in British Columbia. That is, they are free of the strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza responsible for animal and human illness in Southeast Asia.

17. According to CFIA, all these subtypes have been previously observed in North America and none are of significant concern from an animal health perspective, given the bio-security measures already in effect. The Public Health Agency of Canada has been working with the CFIA on the testing and has determined that there is no information in these findings suggesting a new threat to human health.

18. The national wild bird survey includes samples taken from migratory birds along significant flyways in seven provinces, Manitoba, Quebec, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Alberta. Ontario has completed preliminary screening, and samples identified as H5 are now undergoing confirmatory testing at the National Centre for Foreign Animal Diseases in Winnipeg. Animal and human health specialists from the federal government will examine subtypes from the four remaining provinces to rule out the Asian H5N1 strain and determine how pathogenic they are.

19. According to the CFIA, these findings are not surprising given the natural prevalence of the virus in the wild population. The World Health Organization characterizes this natural reservoir as benign and stable. Previous North American wild bird findings indicate H5 can be present at rates of zero to 7.4 per cent in wild birds. These recent Canadian findings are within that range.

Wilkins